

# INDEXA



Winter 2001

Issue 52

A non-profit organization for the enhancement of amateur radio, worldwide peace, and friendship  
Daily Information Session—14.236 @ 23:30Z

## YK9A—2001 *by Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA*

**A**s a member of the YK0A operation near sunspot cycle minimum in November 1994, Al, K7AR, wanted to return to Syria near sunspot cycle maximum. Thus, in the summer of 2000 he began planning for a return trip to YK in 2001.

At the Pacific Northwest DX Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia in August of 2000, Al asked my wife, Vicky, AE9YL, and me if we'd like to join the team. We said we'd love to, and were eventually joined by Dick, N7RO; Lee, VE7CC; Lee's wife, Melissa, VA7MI; Bob, W4DR; Bob's wife, Rosalie, N4CFL; and Jim, W4PRO.

Our goal was to provide YK as a new country to as many as possible and to provide YK to North America and JA on the low bands. In addition, the YL DXCC chasers were pleased to find out that there were several YLs going along on this DX-pedition.

Due to the low band issue, we decided on early February for the operation. Al was in contact with Omar, YK1AO, and he soon advised that all was "go." We would be YK9A.

### Paris Rendezvous

The YK9A team met in Paris on Friday morning, February 2nd, and we all flew to Damascus later in the afternoon on Air France. We were



*The YK9A team (including YK1AO and YK1AH) in the operating room. Standing from left: Rosalie, N4CFL; Lee, VE7CC; Fadil, YK1AH; Dick N7RO; Omar, YK1AO; Melissa, VA7MI; and Jim, W4PRO. Kneeling from left: Al, K7AR; Carl, K9LA; Vicky, AE9YL; and Bob, W4DR.*

all loaded down with luggage, as Omar advised that we would have to bring everything with us in our luggage. "Everything" means all the items required to put four stations on the air, including antennas. Think of a competitive 4A operation for Field Day, and then take it almost halfway around the world in suitcases.

In Ft. Wayne, Vicky and I checked-in

four pieces of luggage in addition to our two, well-stuffed carry-ons. The other seven ops were similarly loaded, and most everyone ended-up paying excess baggage and/or overweight charges.

YK1AO met us at the Damascus airport Friday evening. We quickly cleared Customs and transported all

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## YK9A.....from page 1

of our equipment to the operating site in YK1AO's car, YK1AU's pick-up truck, and a rented mini-bus. We left everything at the operating site and headed to the hotel for a good night's sleep.

The operating site was on the top floor of the Syrian Telecommunications Establishment (STE) building. Our antennas went on the roof so the cable runs were not too long. The operating room was about 15 feet by 20 feet, and had ample space for our four stations. The roof was about 50 feet by 140 feet—it was a bit crowded with nine antennas up there (especially with the Battle Creek Special and its ground radials and guy wires) and we had to be careful where we walked.

We began by setting-up Saturday morning with teams divided between antenna erection and station set-up. The first antennas to go up were the R5, the Battle Creek Special, the 6m Yagi, and the low band receiving loop. Next up were the 15m and 80m inverted vees, the C3SS, and the 2-element 40m Yagi that we borrowed from YK1AO. Last to go up was the 3-element 10m Yagi.

Our amplifier situation didn't turn out as expected. We had originally planned on four amps, but ended-up with just three when G4VGO was unable to join us. In addition, one of the AL-811Hs kept blowing fuses. Our efforts to repair it proved futile, so we ended-up with only two amps for four stations.

Our first QSO was around noon local time on Sunday, February 4th, with DJ9GS on 20m RTTY. Other "first" QSOs were:

<b>First JA</b>	JA0LHU	15m SSB
<b>First Africa</b>	ZS4TX	10m SSB
<b>First VE</b>	VY2RU	10m SSB
<b>First South America</b>	PY7ZZ	10m SSB
<b>First VK</b>	VK6NU	10m SSB
<b>First US</b>	K4ZW	10m SSB

We tried to man all four stations as much as possible during the day, and at least two of the stations during the night. With only nine operators, this gave all of us ample operating time. We tended to gravitate toward our favorite bands and modes. Our pilot stations (W3UR, N6FF, and JH3VNC) provided valuable updates with respect to where we should be in order to keep the multitudes happy.

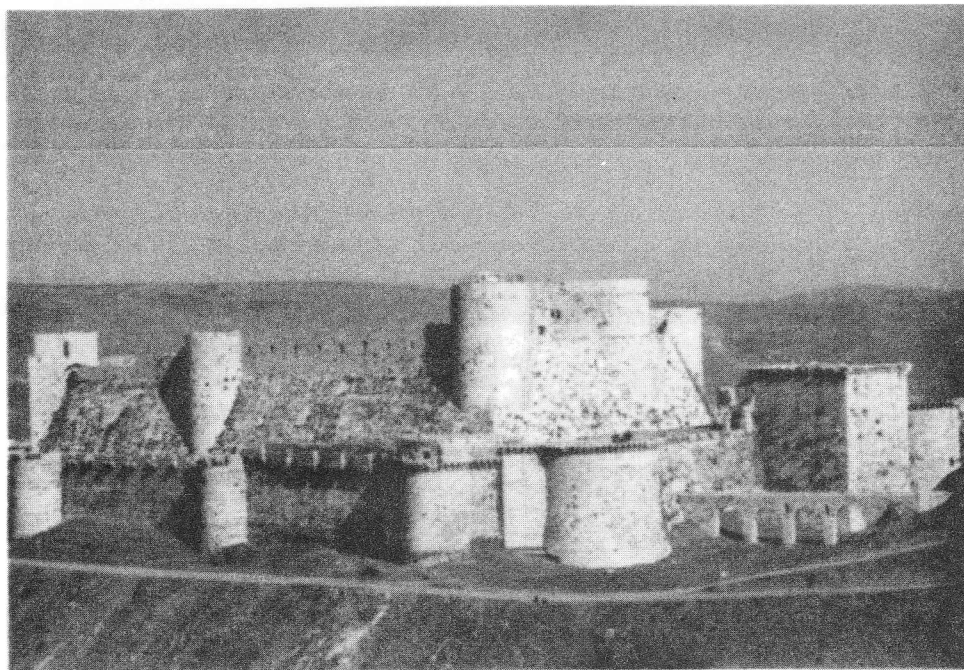
We ended-up with just over 26,000 QSOs in seven days. The QSO count by band, with the most productive band first, is as follows:

	CW	SSB	RTTY	Total
<b>10m</b>	2386	2388	0	4774
<b>15m</b>	2662	1154	518	4334
<b>20m</b>	2621	931	342	3894
<b>40m</b>	3233	429	0	3662
<b>80m</b>	1796	581	0	2377
<b>12m</b>	969	1415	0	2384
<b>30m</b>	1801	0	0	1801
<b>17m</b>	942	708	0	1650
<b>160m</b>	1170	17	0	1187
<b>6m</b>	6	14	0	20

Being so close to Europe made it especially tough to work non-EU stations. We stood by for North America, South America, Africa, JA, and VK/ZL as much as possible. We ended-up with about 24% of our total QSOs with North America, and about 5% of our total QSOs with JA. Our YLs made over 2000 QSOs, making many YL DXCC chasers very happy.

### Sightseeing

Our hotel was close to 2 miles away from the operating site, and we enjoyed walking back and forth every day. Those of us on the day shift especially enjoyed the walk back to the hotel in the evening with the full moon shining brightly on Damascus. Temperatures ranged from around 40 degrees at night to around 60 degrees in the day. We ate breakfast at the hotel, usually snacked for lunch with the help of



*The Krak Castle in northern Syria. Now if only we could operate from there!*

a little bakery around the corner from the STE building, and regularly ate dinner at a restaurant across the street from the STE building. The food was great and the Syrian people were very friendly. And they were very helpful and patient in trying to bridge the Arabic-English language barrier.

We didn't just play radio, either. We took one morning off to go on a tour of Damascus. We saw the old walled city, the bustling market places, and the second biggest mosque in the world. We also took one full day off to head up to northern Syria to view the ancient ruins at Palmyra, the Krak Castle way up on a mountaintop that was built during the Crusades, and the Convent of St. George. Toward the end of our stay we enjoyed an evening tea with YK1AO and his lovely wife Siham, YK1YL, at their apartment.

In summary, we had a great time putting a semi-rare country on the air and visiting a very historical part of the world. We all agreed we'd love to return someday soon to learn more about Syria (and play radio a little bit, too!).

We'd like to thank YK1AO and the Technical Institute of Radio (the Syrian amateur radio club) for their help in getting us on the air.

And thanks to all of our sponsors, donors, and pilot stations as listed on our QSL and on our Web site at: <<http://www.qsl.net/k7ar>> (then click on the Syria link.)



*The east end of the rooftop showing the C3SS tribander and the 2-element 40 meter Yagi.*

## Where to find us



For a membership application, a list of our goals and objectives, or a listing of the rare DX that we have supported over the years, visit INDEXA on the World-wide Web.

**[www.indexa.org](http://www.indexa.org)**

## New Life Members.....

PA3ELD	K7KGB	K0CFI	W3DRY	WB2O	W5JES
and	KZ5RO				

## Extra Help Provided By.....

N6QI	WA1ZIC	KG4LDB	N4UCJ	N0GWR	PY2OCG
N9GM	K8ESQ	W1WRN	W5KFN	KA3VIY	AA8CH
K7EWG	AB4HR	W4LM	WA2QQF	KR6DE	and
WZ4P					



## The Castle of the Knights Sightseeing in Syria—Karak des Chevaliers

Listen carefully and you will hear the silence broken by the muted pounding of approaching hooves. The sound intensifies as the horses and their crusading riders near the main entrance to the castle that towers hundreds of meters above the valley floor. Once inside, the pounding of hooves converts to the click-clack of hooves along a cobblestone and covered slope that gives way to the inner courtyards of the castle within a fortress, the Karak des Chevaliers or Qala' al- Husn.

Steeped in history, the castle overlooks the Homs Gap, which runs from Syria's Mediterranean coast to the country's interior. This formidable structure was built by the Crusaders in 1150 and it took 100 years to complete. Some consider this well-preserved ruin to be one of the most important examples of Medieval military architecture.

The limestone Castle of the Knights could house a garrison of 4,000 and its storage vaults were equipped to handle great reserves of food, not only for the Knights, but for their hundreds of horses. And what castle would be complete without the protection of a moat and towers along its outer wall (thirteen in this case)? One tower is even said to bear evidence of Richard the Lionhearted.

The Knights were forced to surrender in 1271 when they were conquered by Sultan Baibars.

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## DXPEDITIONING BASICS

by

Wayne Mills, N7NG

A DXpedition manual co-published by  
INDEXA and the ARRL

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